

# FACT SHEET | Investing in a Strong Start for All Children

*2015 Budget for a Better Minnesota*

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Every child deserves an excellent start. That is why Governor Dayton is proposing a broad range of investments in all children and families, including universal preschool for every four-year-old, continuing early learning scholarships for those most in need, investing in Minnesota's child care assistance program, and continuing investments in ParentAware. These proposed investments would let families choose the best early childhood setting for them, help narrow our state's achievement gap, save families tens of thousands of dollars on child care costs, and help prepare every child for excellence in education and life.

## Investing in Options for Early Learners

Governor Dayton's budget proposal would invest \$343 million to provide voluntary, full-day pre-Kindergarten early learning opportunities to every 4-year-old in Minnesota. This bold new investment would directly address Minnesota's achievement gap, and prepare every student for success in school and life while continuing Minnesota's successful early learning scholarships for those who need them most.

- **Providing High-Quality Pre-K for 47,300 Learners** – Too many children are entering kindergarten unprepared to learn. The Governor is proposing a \$343 million investment to provide every four-year-old in Minnesota access to high-quality early learning programs. In its first year of operation, the program would allow an estimated 47,300 four-year-olds to attend preschool. Within just a few years, 57,000 kids would be enrolled in preschool statewide. A growing body of research shows that giving kids a great early start is the best strategy to close gaps, and help all students achieve their greatest potential. And experts have found that every \$1 invested in high quality early learning can yield up to a \$16 return on the state's investment.
- **Continuing Early Learning Scholarships** – The Governor's universal pre-kindergarten proposal would continue the early learning scholarship program that currently serves over 12,500 young learners, and would expand eligibility to children from 0-5 years old. Continuing our investment in scholarships, while providing universal access for all four-year-olds, would help ensure more at-risk children can access high-quality preschool opportunities even earlier.
- **Eliminating the Head Start Waiting List** – While 12,070 children benefitted from Head Start services last year, 2,485 children were stuck on the waiting list. Governor Dayton's \$19.4 million investment would work toward eliminating the waiting list and ensure no child is denied service.
- **Expanding School Breakfasts** – Research shows that breakfast is considered the most important meal of the day. But right now, only 39 percent of all elementary age students participate in the school breakfast program. The Governor's budget would invest \$28.1 million over the next biennium to ensure that every child, from PreK to grade 3, has access to a nutritious meal to start their day.
- **Helping Kids Read** – The Minnesota Reading Corps provides trained tutors for students who are struggling with their literacy skills. The Governor's budget would invest an additional \$10 million in the program, focusing resources on PreK through first grade. Reading Corps would be able to grow from 1,200 to almost 1,700 AmeriCorps members, and increase the number of children served to 44,000 each year.
- **Intervening Early** – The Governor's budget would invest \$2 million to strengthen the Help Me Grow initiative – a nationwide effort that helps states organize and leverage existing resources in order to best serve families with at-risk children. The funds would create a statewide system focused on detecting problems for at risk children, age 0-8, and connecting those kids with essential services. Early interventions are shown to decrease the need for more costly services in the future.
- **Helping at Home** – The Governor's budget proposal would invest \$2.6 million to expand access to home visiting services for high-risk mothers and infants, benefitting an additional 300 pregnant or parenting teens, at-risk pregnant women, and at risk families with children under age five. Home visiting programs have been shown to prevent child abuse and neglect, encourage positive parenting, promote child development and school readiness, and improve economic stability.

## Investing in Options for Affordable, Quality Child Care

The Governor's budget proposal would invest \$488 million in children and families. These efforts would give families flexibility to ensure all children receive the care and support they need to succeed in school and life.

- **Relieving Child Care Costs** – Right now, Minnesota is the third-most expensive state in the nation for child care. On average, child care for one four-year-old in Minnesota costs \$901 per month, or \$10,812 per year. Helping parents avoid those costs, while ensuring kids are receiving high-quality learning opportunities all day long, is an investment that will pay off for tens of thousands of Minnesota families, and produce better results for our students.
- **Expanding the Child Care Tax Credit** – Under current law, only 38,000 Minnesota families are eligible to receive tax credits for child care. The Governor's proposal would expand eligibility for these tax credits to a total of 130,000 Minnesota families. The proposal also would increase the average credit by \$429 with some families seeing as much as a \$1,200 increase.
- **Investing in Quality, Affordable Child Care** – The Governor's budget would provide \$17.5 million to improve access to quality child care for low-income working families. This investment would provide child care for an additional 1,375 children and enable 8,000 more children to enroll in highly-rated ParentAware programs. The proposal would provide incentives for providers to improve quality while also simplifying paperwork for the Child Care Assistance Program.